2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

there were 181 construction workers on their island, and 38 or 40 percent of those were black, although all did not come from the immediate area. In the area of operations employment, 111 of 250 total workers on Kiawah or 44 percent were from Johns, Wadmalaw, or Yonges in April of 1976. These are startup operations, but the same trends can be observed on Hilton Head Island. At the Hilton Head Company, 37 of the 103 workers are minorities, as compared to 40 percent local residents as employees for the local Holiday Inn.[19]

Despite these improved job opportunities, the Sea Islands remain among areas listed by the BCD Council of Governments as economically distressed. For example, Edisto Island had a 1970 median family income of about $2,500. Approximately 60 percent of Edisto's population reported incomes below the 1970 poverty level. Of the 2,024 residents on Wadmalaw Island, 1,053 had incomes below the poverty level; the median income for Wadmalaw was $4,700.[20]

The high poverty levels reported for the Sea Island areas are related not so much to the employment opportunities in the area as to a lack of skills that prevents the islanders from applying for well-paid jobs. In 1980 more than 50 percent of the respondents in one study undertaken on Wadmalaw, Johns, and James islands had less than a ninth-grade education (though there are many permanent inhabitants of the Sea Islands who hold university and professional degrees). Members of the labor force in 1980 were employed as unskilled private household workers, maintenance workers, clerks, food service workers, unskilled hospital personnel, and the like.[21]

As noted, the agricultural patterns have changed over the years. When the Indians had been driven out of the islands, the land was owned partly by tenant black farmers and partly by white planters whose acreage was worked by African slaves. Immediately after the Civil War, only blacks could buy land in the region. Thousands of acres had been left by planters when they fled from the Union troops. They could not buy back the land because they could not pay the federal direct tax imposed by the Washington government, and even if they had been financially able to pay the taxes, they could not have made their way through the Union camps to do so. The federal government and various societies in the North wishing to befriend the blacks wanted the island property to go to the free slaves. To meet this inten-

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

Mrs. Janie Hunter

THIS WAS A KINDA POOR COUNTRY

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There were ten children in my family. Daddy was a foreman for Mr. Jenkins, and he have his own garden. I work in it. All work in it. Pick lima beans, pick cotton, tie the two cotton pod in the bag, and put a string on 'em, and hang the bag around your neck, and go to each one of those cotton bush, and pick the cotton, and stuff 'em in the bag. They was paying two cents a pound. Make thirty-five or forty cents a day. Man is getting forty cents a day.

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We wasn't making enough to afford a good living. My daddy, he make a living out the creek. He catch fish and we go around and sells 'em—a whole string for ten cents. Me and my sister Florence, we goes around with white dishpan on we head and sometime make two dollars. And two dollars would give you a box of food that time, 'cause food was very cheap. You could buy three cent worth of sugar, and you get a whole big piece of fat meat like that for a dime. You get a sack of grits for about fifty cent. Food was much cheaper than it is now. That's how we make living. Plant plenty of sweet potato, plenty peas and corn, and raise hog.

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Then we had flat flour. That's when President Hoover had chair. We had to go 'round to Mr. Walpool yard. They used to haul the flour there in one those big van truck, and load up his barn with this flour. Then all the colored and white had to line up and call by name, and they give you a bag of flat flour. 'Til we finally made a song out of it:

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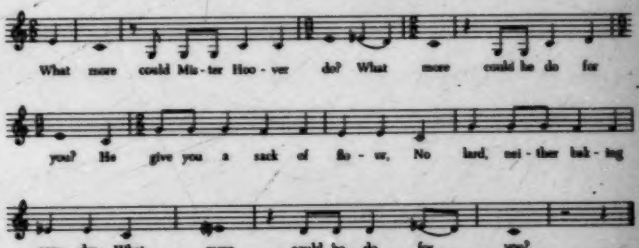
[539]


What more could Mis-ter Hoo-ver do? What more could he do for
you? He give you a sack of flo-ur, No lard, nei-ther bak-ing
pow-der, What more could he do for you?

[252]

Everybody so hungry, so want the flour. We have to mix the flour, didn't have no grease, no lard. Just put 'em in the pan and bake. Some people could afford to buy baking powder and fix it good. But who couldn't, just had to bake it—sprinkle some flour on the bottom of the frying pan so it won't stick.

But after he turned out and President Roosevelt took seat, then we began to live a little better life. I don't think just the Negro was glad; I guess some of the white too was glad when President Roosevelt took the chair. This was a kinda poor country.

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

Rev. G. C. Brown

THOSE WERE ROUGH DAYS

159 735 My wife and I've been here since '36. No pastor had lived here the last forty years before we came. And of course by not living with the people, they couldn't know their need and their desire. They wanted somebody to come and live with the people—that's why we came.

159 735 657 [465] The first thing I found here was extreme poverty. That was during the days of the Depression, and there was no work except the WPA project. That white schoolhouse out there was built as a WPA project. The men on the farms were working for seven cents an hour. Oh yeah, seven cents. And the women, five cents.

735 657 462 241 The men plowed; the women did all the farm work. That time they didn't have planters to plant the potatoes. They cut the potatoes, dropped them in the field, and the men did all the work with the plows. That give pretty good farm employment. You had a number of men running plows, the women go along and drop the potatoes, and that give them a good day's work—several days' work in springtime. That give them employment during the planting season.

And the cabbage plant out by hand. Nowadays some have a planter. Some children worked then, but they didn't have too many children that time. There hadn't been so much marrying and going on.

735 [262] [243] Those were rough days. Food was short, scarce, didn't have much. The most they ate those days, they ate rice, grits and canned tomatoes. They bought their tomatoes at the store. They were cheap then. They bought the grits. Some made their own grits. They had a few mill. And they used to raise their own rice. There were a lot of rice farms around. They had a way of cleaning it and milling it.

735 432 226 •434 Most of 'em were poor. Had no income. Very little income. They lived out of the creek. In the summertime they had crabs and shrimp, and in the wintertime had oysters. You could buy right at your door about three times a week, undressed shrimp—five cents a plate. In the wintertime we buy

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[p.97]

41 Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

fish. People went into the streams and they hauled out fish trying to make a living. Anything they could do to make a living.

They used to gather moss—this same moss. Every month a man came along with a big truck to pick up this moss for mattress factory. They had pretty good moss business. They had three or four sales a year. They had a special way to cure the moss. Dig a hole in the ground and put hot water on it and that'd make it cure quicker.

The homes were poor. Lots of the homes were built out of logs. They go into the woods and cut a log about six feet, then put another six feet. And the frame was cut out of the woods, most of it. Sills, uprights, everything—cut right out of the natural woods. And for a long time they'd be lined with newspapers and any number of houses burned down during the winter. You know those were hard days.

The chimney was built out of stick and mud. They built the frame from the ground up out of wood, and they took pine straw and mud and daub that inside and out. Kind of clay-like. They build up this fireplace and give it a shape—outside and inside. Then they make a fire and bake it. It get kind of hard like brick-making, and they'd use those for heating. That was a common thing here then. They could put a rock or something down and cook in the fireplace.

Then in the summertime most of 'em cook outdoors. They'd lay two green logs together and make a fire between and put those pots on. That was the cooking utensils.

Sometimes a rain would come, wash out a piece of the chimney in three places. It was dangerous. Sometimes a house catch afire and burn down from the chimney. Pine straw was the binder with the clay. I don't think there's one around this island anywhere now. It's been years since I've seen one.

When I came all these roads were dirt. I think that there were only three cars in my churchyard except mine. That was the general thing all over the island. They used carts and that little tacky—pony, little horse, you know. Almost everybody had a pony, marsh tacky they call it.

Rev. C. C. Brown

WORLD WAR NUMBER TWO IS WHAT CHANGED THIS ISLAND FINANCIALLY

World War Number Two is what changed this island financially. The army came and got the men, carry 'em to war. Well, the farmer had to change his plan of farm. He had to go to tractors—didn't have the man-

4: Carawan & Carawan B,2-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

Mr. Joe Deas

I BEEN GOING IN THE CREEK FOR FORTY-ODD YEARS

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226 Fishing, yeah man, I been doing that for years. Get 'em with net; get 'em with line. Go down and push the boat overboard, go to bail 'em out, and go out casting. We go to Hut Creek, Willis Creek, then out to the sea. Great Lord, that's miles and miles out there—way out past the place they call Kiawah, then go out to the south. Get your whiting and trout. For mullet you go in the night. Course if you got a net, then you can go in the day and catch shrimp.

[286 I make nets—knit 'em with cord and needle. Make my needle out of
227 wood, board, tin. You can make 'em out of palmetto—take a branch of pal-
824] metto and cut 'em out of that. I make all most things myself—boat, net, two-wheel cart. If you ain't got that, you have to ride the ox.

I do everything from the time I could turn around for myself. I been going in the creek for forty-odd years. Catched a ton of fish. Gone around
[432 and sell 'em to different people—make a living. I gone and got a license.
•434] Have to go to customs house and get license to go in the creek—get the fingerprint and all. When you come back from the creek, if you don't have enough to sell, you got enough for your family to eat.

That's the way we had to struggle in this world. But thank the Lord, we're here yet.

41 Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

159 226 he teach me how to paddle a boat. After he died, I took it up myself. I did the same thing: go in the river and catch some fish and sell it. Most of it is mullet fish, mullet and spots, and some catfish, all different kinds [illegible] net. Run from three to four feet deep to maybe sometimes seven to eight feet deep. I go by myself or with my brother.

159 (335) I began to do some carpenter work too. I was working along with a carpenter, and after a time I began to learn how to do some of the work for myself. So I finally try alone, and I made it all right. I do my own work now. (484) I'm working at a block and pipe company—making door lintels and window lintels, all different kinds of stone.

• (434) The best kind of money people can make is on electricity works and (241) chanical works and maybe expert carpenters and bricklayers. Harvesting season in the fall, you can't make much because it's only about three or four weeks long. You can do all right for those three or four weeks. You can make it anyhow. But 'round May and June, that's about the best months of the year on the farm. October you start having maybe some string beans. Then you sit 'til next year in May and June.

Mr. Benjamin Bligen
MORE LIGHT IS SHINING

I am forty. The look of the pudding is not the taste all the time. I have two children. I have a better time raising mine than my parents had raising us. Foods went up a lot, but still you can make it a little better now than you is in past time.

More light is shining. Can see more. Likewise you can do more and think more, 'cause I believe that more light is shining now than was shining in the past. And so help me God, I so glad that I can see some light. And I know there's more light for me. There is a bright light somewhere and I'm going to find it.

4: Carawan & Carawan B,2-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

Mrs. Janie Hunter

I SEEM TO MAKE IT ALL RIGHT

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•434 When we first bought that piece of land in 1940, my husband was making thirteen dollars a week. I was washing and ironing for two person, and I wasn't making over three dollars a week. And we had to buy the land off that, and build that same house which burn down with that money, plus raise children. But I seem to make it all right. I get used to it. I get four dollars a day now, and it still don't seem much easier. Food cost more, clothes cost more, and the children takes more to go to school.

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[511] But the Lord didn't promise no human being to eat grass. Only horse and hogs eat grass. So he have a way paved for all those children, and we's had, if it be just one good meal a day. And I raise all of 'em up—hard time and good time—all is a healthy family. Didn't have no trouble 'til I lose my baby a year ago, and he wasn't sick but two days. But with the Lord, all things possible. And God give and He takes, and He takes nothing but His own. I know all those children belongs to the Lord, and He only give it to me for a special time. And I feel like He wants me to keep them children, He make a way for feed them. As the song say, "feed you when you hungry, and He clothes you when you naked." So up to this present minute I can say I have thirteen children living, and I thank God for all of them, and they is good children.

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[p.53]

000 of Blacks on the Sea Islands.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SEA ISLANDERS BLACK WORK FORCE

121 464 The following 1970 census figures are for the rural non-farm population of Charleston county and as such can only serve as an indirect indicator of the characteristics of the Black Sea Island labor force. These figures will be followed for comparison with those generated by a more specific survey of the islanders sponsored by the United Methodist Church.

464 162 The total number of persons in the rural labor force is 12,485. This work force is comprised of 8,014 males and 4,606 females. Jobs in different areas of manufacturing engaged the highest number of workers (2,319). The wholesale-retail trades employed 2,271 workers. The personal service industry which includes private household workers was the next big employer (1,970). Five hundred and eleven workers were employed in the agricultural industry.

•434 While the median annual income of rural families was $6,895, 28.4% of this population had incomes below the poverty line. The income deficit of this segment was $2,152. There were 2,390 families with these incomes under 434 592 464 poverty level. Female head of households had a median income of $3,816. This 1,271 member female work force had

6: Smith I,Y-5 (no date) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders · NN23
South Carolina

434 592 464 an unemployment rate of 3.1%, which compares to a 3.7% ratio for male workers. Females were the heads of 83% of the families with poverty level incomes.

434 On a county basis, the median annual income of Black workers was $4,635. Black female head of households earned a median income of $3,162. Six thousand nine hundred and forty-one or some 44.6% of the 15,576 Black families in the county had incomes below the poverty line. The median income of families below the poverty line was $2,193. Fifteen per cent of the total number of families were receiving public assistance.

The 1960 census reported 10% of the Sea Island families with incomes under $1,000; 65% of this work force earned less than $2,000. This United Methodist Church survey reports a 15% unemployment rate across the islands. Employment in "the area is of a seasonal nature and most people are out of active employment for a large part of the year."[2] 464 794

The discrepancies between these figures are apparent. First hand exposure to the islands would suggest the accuracy of the latter figures. However, the methodological limitations of the church survey effort makes the reported estimates suspect. For example, the researchers were on the islands only one week, during which time they concentrated 464 794 114

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[2]Colin Moore and Robert Washington, A Profile of Rural Poverty, A Report on Economic Conditions in the Sea Islands of South Carolina, August, 1970.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

533 545 If the black tenants on a plantation surprise its owner with the finish of their performance, he may feel inclined to organize a society, put the entertainments they give on a more permanent basis, and hold singing contests between members of different churches, denominations, communities, plantations, or counties, as was done in our section.

Years ago I found it expedient to form the Spiritual Singers Society of Coastal Georgia, and in 1934 to organize another society, called The Plantation Singers, which specializes in secular songs. This was done to help restore the prestige which the slave songs once enjoyed. Friends generously gave trophies for each type of folksong, and both societies have accomplished precisely what it was hoped they would. Only vouched-for singers of the old songs are eligible for membership, and their names are enrolled in a record book. Buttons, with the name of the society around the rim, have been given out to well-nigh a thousand singers along the Coastal Highway, from the Ogeechee River to the Florida line. These buttons proclaim to the world that the men, women, and children who wear them are proud to sing the old songs. There is nothing like the weight of numbers to add importance to any movement! Big "Star Singer" buttons distinguish the leaders, and provide the incentive needed to overcome shyness, and to bring them into the limelight. [434] Incidentally, in the division of the proceeds—every penny of which goes to the Negroes—the leaders are given twenty-five or fifty cents more than the basers.

533 545 179 The particular value of our "sings" lies in the likelihood of impressing a large number of Negroes with the high regard in which their music is held by white people of importance. In 1934, the annual festival at the Sea Island Casino brought out an audience of over three hundred. It is readily seen that one hundred and twenty-five singers, from Negro communities a hundred miles apart, can act as missionaries in carrying word to their neighbors of how the white folks behave when they want a song repeated, of how they sometimes yell: "Bravo! Bravo!"—whatever that means—and that they pay real money to hear Negroes sing.

533 545 [434] [187] Except on one occasion, it has always been possible to send the singers home with a dollar in the hand and their transportation paid. At the festival, held during the dark days of the bank moratorium of March, 1933, the singers were thankful to get fifty cents, food, and all expenses. That was a memorable night. A tall Negro from Broadfield—making the "Sign of the Judgment" with uplifted arm—led the sixty swaying singers in the shout: "Can't Hide." They began to move quietly, as

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

to the people themselves by the respectful title of Maum. The mistress herself or the overseer's wife was also usually present to assist the midwife at the confinement of a Negro woman. At Christmas the planter rewarded the granny by giving her 75 cents for each delivery during the year. He also might seek to encourage the mother to care for her child properly by giving her, perhaps, as much as a $1 for every living child she had at Christmas. Henry A. Middleton, Jr.'s, practice was to give every woman with an infant one month old $1 and the same amount to every woman with a year-old child. At Christmas in 1859, he rewarded twenty-six mothers with month-old infants, and fourteen mothers with year-old infants.[59]

St. Helena planters allowed new-born infants "two of each garment and six diapers."[60] The garments were flannel dresses, dresses of cotton checks, and jackets of homespun.[61]

As soon as a mother resumed work after confinement, she was often required to take her infant to a nurse or granny, whose task it was to take care of both the "lap babies" and the "knee babies" during working hours. Sometimes the same granny looked after the plantation babies year after year, while on other plantations this task was assigned to a group of women who took turns every month "minding child." Henry A. Middleton, Jr., rewarded the "monthly nurses" on his plantation "75c. for infants that live." As long as a mother suckled her infant, she left her work in the field at stated intervals to do so, or an older child brought the baby to the field to be fed.

[59] Wechaw Plantation Book.
[60] *Port Royal Letters*, p. 44.
[61] Wechaw Plantation Book.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

her husband's pails which they took to the field with them for dinner.[26]

If the wife were frugal, she might have a portion of the weekly rations left when Monday came around again, and these she might either feed to her pigs and chickens or sell to the overseer or to an island storekeeper. The money was hers to use for the good of the family, but it was hers, nevertheless. It was the woman of the family who, with the aid of her children, worked most of the family patch, and it was usually the woman who marketed the produce and pocketed the money received in exchange.

The planters helped to make of woman the dominant sex in the family life of the slave by the position which they gave her in the plantation regime. The cabin was hers. The children, too, were listed on the plantation records as belonging to the mother. Seldom was the father's name indicated. Thus a person might go through life known as Binah's Toby or Moll's July. Likewise the mother had the privilege of naming the new baby unless she graciously yielded the right to its father or to a friend or relative. In this right she often exercised a singular taste, for one child might be called Jupiter, another Quash, a third January, and a fourth Hard Times.

Miss Towne was amused at the jealousy of their "natural rights" which the men on St. Helena Island began to show after that region had come under the jurisdiction of the Federal Army during the Civil War. "Political freedom they are rather shy of, and ignorant of," she

[26] Some planters, as it has already been pointed out, delegated plantation cooks to prepare the noon meal for the field hands so that they might have something hot to eat at this time. Some planters also allowed an hour's rest at nine o'clock for breakfast.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

Obviously, there was not the opportunity for home life in the slave family that there was in the free family, nor was meal time the institution that it was in the white family, for there was rarely to be found in the slave cabin a "family table."[332] Some observers of slave life thought also that there was little family affection among them. Edward S. Philbrick wrote to a friend that there was far less family affection and attachment among members of slave families than existed among the Irish peasants, adding, however, that he did not know "how much allowance to make for their being so much less demonstrative in their emotions, and more inured to suffering."[333]

LEISURE TIME

When task was done, the slave was his own master within the limits of plantation regulation. He might go home to work on his piece of ground, tend his pigs and chickens, play with his children, or fish in the creek. The slave had several ways of making money for his own use, in which he was encouraged by his master. As has already been pointed out, the black people ordinarily supplied their masters with chickens and eggs for which they usually received the market price.[334] They often sold their hogs and the truck from their garden patches; they wove baskets, and made boats and canoes. An overseer on the Butler plantation on St. Simon's Island said that he regularly allowed a certain number to go to town on Sundays

[332] Pierce, "Report," *Rebellion Records*, sup., I, 304. "Except on Sundays, these people do not take their meals at a family table, but each one takes his hominy, bread, or potatoes sitting on the floor or on a bench, and at his own time. They say their masters never allowed them any regular time for meals." In this connection see *supra*, p. 137n.

[333] *Letters from Port Royal*, p. 15.

[334] *Supra*, p. 86.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

to dispose of eggs, coopers' wares and canoes, but required that they be home by twelve o'clock unless by special permission.[35] When it became illegal for a slave to hold personal property, the master, overseer, storekeeper, and slave all found ample means of evading the law as the cases arising on this statute indicate. Masters often paid their people for extra work done on the plantation, such as, gathering corn blades for fodder or collecting rice straw. Miss Mary B. Elliott, of Beaufort, gave her slaves 5 cents a pound for blades.[36] The master also gave them presents of money, especially at Christmas or New Year.

By thus being permitted to possess personal property of his own, the slave felt his condition to be less abject. Some planters tried to help their people to accumulate more than they could ordinarily obtain through the sale of "nigger truck" so that they might have some degree of independence. James Hamilton Couper set apart a field for the benefit of twenty-five picked men and allowed them half of their Saturday's labor in which to work it. He required all to work faithfully in the common field during the first year, and at the end of that time divided the $1,500 arising from the sale of the crop equally among them. But when they were left to work the field as they chose, they did very little and at the end of two years abandoned it entirely.[37]

While some slaves wisely spent their money for comforts which the master did not provide, others laid out their pittances in indulgences: liquor, tobacco, and fancy

[35] "On the Management of the Butler Estate," *Southern Agriculturist*, Dec., 1828.

[36] Elliott Account Book.

[37] Lyell, *Second Visit to the United States*, I, 268.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
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THE NEGRO AS A LANDOWNER

175 423 The opportunity to buy land of their own created the first real excitement among the Negroes which had occurred since "gun shoot." They were all astir trying to stake out claims and then trying to get their claims considered by the commissioners. They had the money which 175 they had earned as plantation hands for the Government 423 and as laborers at the camps with which to meet the pur- 434 chase price. Besides, many of them had sold fish, chickens, and garden truck to the superintendents and the soldiers. W. C. Gannett estimated in 1863 that a driver on one of the St. Helena plantations had made four or five hundred dollars since the Federal occupation. "He is all ready to buy land," he wrote, "and I expect to see him in ten years a tolerably rich man."[67] Many Negroes who did [476] not have sufficient funds to buy tracts of the size they desired organized clubs and bought land in this way.[68]

175 423 Whenever it was possible the Negroes chose to purchase land on the plantations where they had been born. In staking out their claims they invariably moved their cabin in the "street" to the new plots of land, and started life as landholding citizens on the very ground which they had cultivated as slaves. Thus the transition from slavery to freedom scarcely interrupted the daily routine. Now they had freedom of movement, but with it [434] had come the responsibility of earning their own living, [241] and the only method open to most of them was the cultivation of their little tracts after the manner learned in slavery.

[67] *Letters from Port Royal*, p. 37n.
[68] *Beaufort Republican*, May 30, 1872.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

an estate which had numbered 1,284 acres.[5] All but Edgar W. Fripp after a few years sold their land in small plots to Negroes. Fripp, a minor at the time of the war, retained his holding until recently when he sold it for a hunting preserve.

The prosperity in which the freedmen of Port Royal found themselves in 1865 was largely delusive, for it was the prosperity of war times. The presence of the soldiers afforded a ready market for whatever the Negroes had to sell; the presence of the camps offered ready work at high wages for those who wanted it; the fostering care of the Freedman's Bureau kept them from starvation in time of necessity. The magnificent bounty of $300 which "Government" offered all volunteers led many a St. Helena youth to enter the army. The bounty money he used to buy ten acres of land and the equipment for his "plantation," keeping out $100, perhaps, to "pleasure" himself. Whenever it was possible to peddle chickens, fish, and garden truck to the soldiers, the freedmen never raised cotton, for they got high prices for their wares.

All who had bought land by the close of the war, had for the most part erected their own cabins and equipped them with a few pieces of cheap furniture, beds, tables, and chairs. They now must have plates and knives and forks. They must have both a work suit and a "Sunday best," and the cloth must be of the finest. They must have carts, buggies, and horses. Indeed, their purchases at the trade stores were so liberal that the military authorities several times interfered to prevent what they consid-

[5] Direct Tax Case, No. 17, 498 filed in Court of Claims March 25, 1892; No. 17, 366 filed Feb. 6, 1892.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
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William Elliott, one of several natives who had returned to Beaufort to live, was appointed to look after the needy in Beaufort and on the islands. In this way, the Negroes were able to face "the starving times."

175 248

If the profits from the cultivation of sea-island cotton were low in ante-bellum days, they were far less during the uncertain days of reconstruction. While some Negro landowners worked their cotton well, fertilizing the land and hoeing the crops regularly, still others were careless and indifferent. As a rule the cotton grown after slavery was of a coarser quality than that produced by ante-bellum planters. The fine seed, the result of many years of selection, had deteriorated. In fact, much of it was lost when the crop of 1861 was ginned at the North. Nor did the Negroes take pains to manure their fields. Gathering marsh grass and mud were disagreeable tasks which most of them preferred to avoid. The Negro landowners were further handicapped by the fact that they had to sell their cotton in the seed to the island stores and could not hold it for higher prices. A correspondent for *Harper's Monthly*,

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S. G. W. Benjamin, who visited St. Helena Island in 1878, found most of the Negroes growing vegetables and only a small quantity of cotton. Nevertheless, cotton re-

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mained the Islanders' only money crop. When, therefore, the boll weevil destroyed the production of sea-island cotton in 1918, the Negro landowners of St. Helena were confronted with an economic readjustment as radical as their fathers had faced after slavery.

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After the inflation of war times, the Negroes of St. Helena quite generally settled down to an economic regime of self-sufficiency. They raised sweet potatoes and

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
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enough corn to supply themselves with hominy and grits and their chickens, pig, and ox with a scanty meal a day pieced out with marsh grass and with moss which they pulled down from the live oaks with long poles. When they sold their cotton in the late fall, they had a little money. With this they paid their taxes and bought clothes, and during the rest of the year lived without money.

Sometimes their crops did not yield enough to meet the taxes. In May, 1872, the *Beaufort Republican* advertised 318 farms on St. Helena and Ladies islands for sale, the taxes on which had not been paid for three years.[18] The size of their holdings was not only reduced by sale for taxes but also by division among heirs, so that it was not long until the condition which Philbrick had predicted in 1864 actually occurred. He had thought of dividing his plantations among the Negroes by selling them life-leases in order to protect them in the ownership of their land. In explaining his unwillingness to sell the land in fee simple he wrote to his superintendent:

> This occurred to me as a means of avoiding the terrible and disastrous confusion which it will be next to impossible to avoid after a term of years, if the fee should be conveyed, when the purchasers die and sell or change land as they will to a certain extent in time. It is bad enough to trace a title and find out whether it is good for anything here in systematic New England, . . . but it makes my orderly bones ache to think of a time when, after some men now purchasing land shall die, leaving two or three sets of children, some born under wedlock and some not, some not their own but their wives' children, some even of questionable parentage, and some who were never heard of before, all claiming a slice of the

[18] *Beaufort Republican*, May 29, 1872.

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towns where they found employment as servants and day laborers. Miss Towne speaks of their flocking back to St. Helena once a year "from Savannah, Charleston, Bull River, and all about" to attend the "exhibition" of Penn School.[18] Robert Smalls, famous during the war as the Beaufort Negro who turned over a Confederate steamer to Union officers and later conspicuous as a Congressman from South Carolina, attempted in 1879 to lead a group of Negroes from St. Helena's Parish to Arizona.

The discovery and utilization of the phosphate beds along the coast of South Carolina came in 1870 as a godsend to black laborers as well as to the whites who organized the companies. Many a St. Helena black man left his farm for his wife and children to cultivate while he went to the "Rock," as the phosphate mines in the coastal counties were called, to get "cash money." When digging was commenced just off Eddings' Point on St. Helena, the news "set all the boys wild."[19] In 1871 the *Beaufort Republican*, after announcing the enlargement of one of the phosphate mines, added, "Our colored friends can look to the future with pleasure and know that they will not have to roam over the country next summer to look for work but will find it on Bull River at the Oak Point Mine."[20] When the phosphate beds were exhausted, oyster factories began to be erected at Beaufort, on Ladies Island, and on St. Helena so that the Negroes still had a means of earning a little ready money either as hands in the factories or as laborers on the oyster boats. There were, also, still five or six white families on St. Helena

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 286.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 273.
[20] *Beaufort Republican*, Nov. 23, 1871.